United Nations S/2018/657

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 July 2018
English
Original: French

Letter dated 2 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 2 July 2018 from the Syrian Women's Political Movement (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

18-11358 (E) 100718 270718

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 2 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic and English]

We, the Syrian Women's Political Movement, write to you with great alarm concerning the dire fate of millions of civilians in Southern Syria. Since 18 June, the Assad regime forces, backed by Russia, have waged a relentless assault on the innocent women, men and children of Dara'a. The fact that southern Syria was part of the de-escalation agreement brokered in July 2017 by, among others, the Russian Federation, clearly demonstrates that the failure to confront tyranny with meaningful action only encourages ever more determined tyranny and violence against the civilian population.

Throughout the past two weeks, the hostilities have claimed the lives of civilians, heavily damaged civilian infrastructure and forcibly displaced an estimated 45,000–50,000 individuals to date. Reports document five air strikes on hospitals and medical centres in Busra al Hariri, Musayfirah, Sayda, Harak and Jizah as well as air strikes on a kindergarten in Nawa City, a civil defence centre in Musaykah and a mosque in Ghariyah al Sharqiyah. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on core relief items provided by the United Nations and their partners across the border in Jordan. As the initial stock in southern Syria is depleting quickly, the risk of malnutrition and disease outbreaks heightens. In the Suwayda' Governorate, women are reportedly charged informal fees to cross into the governorate, putting them at serious risk of gender-based violence.

We all know what will happen if the Security Council fails to act in the coming days. The death toll will rise. Displacement will grow. More women and girls will be exposed to gender-based violence. And hopes for meaningful peace negotiations will dim. We know this, because we have seen it before: in Aleppo, eastern Ghutah, Homs and elsewhere. Yet now the costs of inaction are even greater, given the millions of lives at risk throughout southern Syria.

The Syrian Women's Political Movement asks the Security Council to use all means at its disposal to protect civilians from Syrian and Russian indiscriminate attacks. We further ask that the Security Council fulfil its responsibilities and consider all possible means to exert greater pressure on the Assad regime and those who aid and abet him, including through the imposition of targeted sanctions and trade measures for the protection of civilians.

The Syrian Women's Political Movement urges the Security Council to take all steps necessary to ensure immediate, continuous and unfettered access for humanitarian aid workers throughout southern Syria. This will require increased financial and material support for Syrians inside Dara'a and other opposition-held areas through local, independent civil society organizations, which we urge the Security Council to actively pursue and implement its resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and all other relevant resolutions, including resolution 2393 (2017).

Finally, the Syrian Women's Political Movement calls upon Security Council members to create the conditions whereby credible political negotiations can commence based on the first Geneva communiqué (2012) and resolution 2254 (2015). We appreciate the support the Council members have provided to Syrian women, and the concern for our equal inclusion in the political process. But ultimately, our inclusion will mean little if the conditions are not created whereby the Syrian regime is compelled to cease its attacks on civilians and stop its use of indiscriminate and illegal weapons under the pretext of counter-terrorism and come to the negotiation

table in good faith. This can only be achieved if the Syrian regime and its allies face consequences for their vicious killing of civilians with impunity and total disregard for the sanctity of human life, human rights and international law.

Secretariat of the Syrian Women's Political Movement